Resistance to Ritual Practice

EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERS

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Why the High School Prom?

- Less than 10 years ago proms were an exclusive part of American life.
- Currently, ultimate coming of age celebration in the UK.
- (Re) Appropriation of this event has more recently been considered.

- Best (2000: 28) posits that ‘the fear of having missed the prom is harnessed as a mechanism to gain students consent to this event and the material and ideological conditions it secures’.

Ritual components:
- Script
- Artefacts
- Audience
- Roles
Why adolescents?

- Adolescence has been coined as a heightened period of storm and stress and is generally characterised by conflict with parents, mood disruptions and risk taking (Arnett, 1999)
- With respect to consumption and the symbolic self, adolescents are in a crucial period of identity formation (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998; Nuttall, 2009)
- How easy is it to resist attending?
  - Non attendance reinforces ‘out-group’ member position (Banister and Hogg, 2004)
  - Heroic individuals who elect whether they want to be part of the system (Weber, 1948)
  - Agency (Kozinets et al, 2004)
Why Perception of Others?

- Individual and even group resistant alternatives particularly during adolescence can be difficult to achieve
- Peer influence and normative behaviour
  - Self-esteem influenced by social comparisons and reflected appraisals
- Perception of anti-consumers by those in their peer group

- Possible cause for avoiding consumption already established (Lee & Conroy, 2005; Lee et al, 2009; Piacentini and Banister, 2009):
  - Previous bad experience
  - Disassociation
  - Religious or cultural reasons
Objectives

- To consider if there is a *perceived* difference between non-choice and anti-choice with regard to the prom and to investigate if and how this influences *perception* of non-attendance

- To explore the implications of anti-consumption (non-attendance) of the high school prom for the attendees *perception* of ‘self’ and to examine possible subsequent social or peer related implications for non-attendees
### Mixed Method

- 12 interviews
- 18-20 years
- Own prom experience
- Comment on who hadn’t attended and why they thought (or knew) this to be the case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n=81 (60%+ response)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Projective technique</td>
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<td>Ethical approach</td>
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<td>Distributed by pupils</td>
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<td>10 days before prom</td>
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Non Consumption

- Could not afford to go
  - Minority
- Lack of resource
- Lack of availability
- Lack of access
  - Hogg (1998)
Risk Averse

- People who don't have a lot of close friends or those who are not as confident as others.
- People who are conscious about their food or weight.
- People with low self-confidence who feel that they will have no-one to dance with or talk to.
Passive Disengagement

People that do not enjoy social events like these are not willing to make an effort to join in and experience the night.

Lazy people. People who are nervous about drinking.
Intentional Disengagement

People who think they are too cool for it, or if they do not like music or dancing.

- People who want to make a statement by not going.
- People that maybe don't have a lot of friends or money.
- People that are a bit antisocial.

Moshe's - antisocial
Shy people - don't feel popular

Some people may believe that the dance wouldn't be good because it is in the school and will be supervised by teachers so they won't be able to do what they want, i.e., drink alcohol.
There was a girl who refused to come. She had very strong wills and is very religious and has strong opinions about things. She didn’t like some of the people in the year – people who went out and drank on a regular basis or people who were knowingly having a sexual relationship with their boyfriends – stuff like that. She said she wasn’t going to support that sort of thing [values of some of the people at the prom]. At the time I thought it was a shame but now I think because all my other friends were there and she wasn’t that I regret her not being there.’

Lucinda, 19
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Discussion</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Degree of resistance varies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Non attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Acceptable?</td>
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<td>○ Unacceptable?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Social norms</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Self and motivation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Misunderstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ Multiple reasons</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Bernieri et al 1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Social perception accuracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Disidentification</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strength of existing social position</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Impact</td>
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<td>○ Positioning</td>
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<td>○ Isolate</td>
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Further Research

- Consider views of non-attendees
- Establish reasons for non-attendance
- How resistant practices related to peer group assimilation or desire for differentiation
- Degree of misunderstanding or distortion?
Thanks for listening...

We are interested in the perceptions of others...